



1-17-2007

To: **Members**

House Federal Relations, Energy and Telecommunications

From: Cliff Christian

Governmental Affairs director

American Heart Association

Subject: **Support for 911 emergency phone system laws**

HB 33 – Rep McNutt

The American Heart Association is in strong support of all measures that will positively affect the time difference between the victim's accident or illness necessitating fast medical intervention. Minutes matter between any incident and the first medical intervention. Fast medical intervention can mean full recovery. The absence of rapid medical link can have tragic consequences to the victim, the family and to society in general.

About 250,000 Americans die from out-of-hospital cardiac arrest each year. With an adequate, uniform, first responder system, beginning with 911, approximately 50,000 lives could be saved each year. The window of opportunity to save a cardiac arrest victim is short – for each minute a person goes without defibrillation, chances of survival decrease by 8-10 percent. This gives only about 10 minutes for defibrillation to be effective. CPR can keep this window open longer, but only an electric shock can restart the heart.

In addition to cardiac arrest, a stroke is a medical emergency and must be treated as one. There is a treatment for people who have suffered an ischemic stroke that could reduce disability. Unfortunately, only about 5 percent of the patients who are eligible to receive the treatment arrive at the hospital within the three hour window in which it must be administered. In Montana, on average, about 22 hours pass before a person who has suffered a stroke receives medical assistance.

Time lost from an inadequate first responder system, beginning with that 911 call, is brain lost. Brain failure from an inadequate the first response system, usually results in reducing a productive citizen to one dependent on others, including the State or outright death. The American Heart Association is confident Montana can do better by fixing our totally inadequate first responder system, including 911.

Heart disease is the number one killer of Montana women and men. Stroke is the number three killer of Montanans